Moore, George
Fragments from Héloïse
& Abélard

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FRAGMENTS FROM HÉLOÏSE & ABÉLARD BY GEORGE MOORE

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LA REPONSE DE GEORGES MOORE EN FORME DE SONNET A SON AMI EDOUARD DUJARDIN (L'AUTEUR DE "LA SOURCE DU FLEUVE CHRETIEN") QUI L'AVAIT INVITE A FONTAINEBLEAU POUR MANGER DE L'ALOSE

La chair est bonne de l'alose
Plus fine que celle du bar,
Mais la Seine est loin et je n'ose
Abandonner Pierre Abélard.

Je suis un esclave de l'art;
La très sage Héloïse pose
Sans robe, sans coiffe et sans fard,
Et j'oublie aisément l'alose.

Mais je vois la claire maison—
Arbres, pelouses et statue!
Dujardin, j'entends ta leçon:

Raison qui sauve, foi qui tue,
Autels éclaboussés du son
Que verse une idole abattue.

PREFACE

WHETHER it be altogether seemly for an author to revise books that have been issued to the public is a question often raised in the newspapers: raised, but not settled, for authors go on just as they began, some revising and some refraining from revisions, according to their temperaments; and as the least knowledgeable among us are well informed on this subject, no purpose would be served by giving here a list of those who have revised and those who have not. My readers would prefer me to plunge straightway into my little tale of woe.

Abélard went to Blois to bemoan his separation from his dear Héloïse in song and meditation. He wrote some songs at Blois, but there were no meditations, which, in my opinion, was a great loss to the book. It may have been that after writing for eighteen months the spring of my inspiration died suddenly without my perceiving it, or it may have been that, being in the midst of many circumstances and thoughts, something dropped out of my mind without my perceiving it. Indeed, I cannot tell how this misfortune occurred any more than I can tell how I caught last year's cold, and as no cheap edition of *Héloïse and Abélard* will be published for five years, I am in a quandary. A library edition of my writings may be published, but when? In one or two years an illustrated edition of *Héloïse and Abélard* may hap, but I would make amends for my negligence or oversight at once. The restored pages, however, do not complete my work of revision.

The dates would not allow of a boy of eleven—eight and a half, eight and three-quarters, nine years old, perhaps, but no more; and the mind of nine and the mind of eleven are different minds, and the dialogue now allotted to Astrolabe is more childlike than the first, perhaps better in every way.

But why, asks somebody, did you not think of all this at the time? There were a great many things to think of, critic. The twelfth century is full of things, all clamouring for utterance, and I being I, it was but human that I should fail to concentrate at a certain moment. The dates led me astray; I tripped, I fell.

But why all this fuss about an additional chapter and the revision of Astrolabe's speech? Have all you who write in newspapers forgotten that whosoever wrote *Hamlet* revised it; that whosoever wrote *Othello* added to it, and that Balzac revised and rewrote, yet his works have lived longer than those of George Sand, who neither revised nor corrected? Wagner forgot to write the rushing passage for violins that takes Elizabeth down from her throne to the unfortunate Tannhäuser, whose praise of Venus has roused the citizens to fury. It did not satisfy the French musicians who assembled in the Opera House to hear it in 1862, but it satisfies those who come after them. Landor revised—but why continue a list that does not pretend to be exhaustive?

The sonnet is, I admit, published to please my friend Dujardin, who was hurt by the publication of the sonnet in *The Fortnightly Review*, for in the introductory matter I gave a false address, placing his house at Blois instead of at Fontainebleau. He wrote to me saying that the change of address plunged him into endless meditations,

and besought me to make an end of them, so I wrote that I had transferred his house from Fontainebleau to Blois because shad are not taken in the Seine. He has since informed me that in this I am mistaken; it appears that shad are taken at the mouth of the Seine, but not in the Seine. And with the hope that my readers will bear with me through this explanation of some trivial circumstance, which it would be an affectation on my part to think they could be interested in even for a moment, I beg them to believe that I am now, and always, very sincerely theirs,

G. M.

mind. It is as good, mayhap, and better than any of those I wrote in the old days, he said, whilst seeking the stirrup with his foot. I shall find a quiet room at Blois to put my rhymes and tunes in order. So let thy prayers be that my verses shall not prove unworthy of her, he cried, looking back over the heads of trouvères and gleemen going to the Castle of Franchard, or returning from it singing songs, from which to escape (for the sake of his own) he urged his nag into a canter till he came to an empty road, which seemed to him favourable to the poet or musician, whichever happened to be uppermost in him at the moment. Thou'lt be glad to see thy stable, he said, addressing his horse, and to reach it the sooner I will allow thee to ascend this hill at a walk; my stanza may be finished before we reach the top, which, however, did not come to pass, for he was not half-way up the long acclivity when horns began to sound in the woods, drawing his thoughts into imaginary hunts of bear and deer. If we are to reach Blois to-night our meditations must end at the top of the hill, he said to his horse, and to himself: to get my rhymes and tunes I must put the country behind me, and he rode all day immersed in rhymes and tunes till the great hill-side came into view, the roofs showing on a fair lemon sky. At last! he cried. Courage! thou'rt near thy stable. But there was no need to urge his horse, for, scenting the still distant town, the tired animal broke into a trot, which did not cease till they came to a hostel. Abélard pressed on up the hill-side, his horse trying to dissuade him from further search by stopping at every sign. The Muses haunt the hill's

summit, he cried, and, obedient to his voice, the patient animal began to climb, stopping, however, before he was asked to stop, in front of an inn that seemed to promise a fulfilment of Abélard's hopes of board, lodging and privacy. But whilst he was trying to come to terms with the taverner, Héloïse's voice called out of his heart, saying: it was at an inn by the water-side that we breakfasted together. And at once he began to seek reasons for not coming to terms with the taverner, whom he left growling at clerks who did not know their own minds. The inn was here, he said, overlooking the river behind these limes; and to the taverner, whom the sound of hooves had drawn to his front door: it was here that a beautiful young woman and myself sat eating delicious shad? It was indeed in my inn that you, sir, and your lady partook of as fine a fish as ever came out of the Loire, and grilled it was in a buttered paper before a fire of dry wood. Thy words, taverner, bring the flavour of thy shad to my mouth; but it behoves me now to think first of quiet, for I have come hither for the writing of songs rather than for the singing of them: thine inn is a tryst for gleemen. Gleemen and even trouvères assemble in my courtyard, replied the taverner, but all these are now at the Castle of Franchard, and shad is past its season. I have come, Abélard said, to write songs for her who is on her way to Brittany, where she will remain till her baby's birth, and I will abide with thee, taverner, if thou hast a lute. A lute I have indeed, the taverner replied, lifting the lid of an oaken chest; a better you will not find in Blois. And whilst Abélard ran his fingers over the strings he told the instrument's story. Thy lute is to my liking, Abélard answered, and pleased with his lodging he descended the stairs, too tired to eat with pleasure; a draught of wine was almost enough before seeking his bed, where, between the fitful, shallow sleep of a man who has spent a long day on

horseback, he pursued his rhymes, longing for the morning.

But on the morrow his rhymes were not with him, and in search of tunes he ran his fingers over the strings. Neither tune nor rhyme is with me to-day, he said. Héloïse is too near for me to write about her, or my trick has deserted me; and in growing dissatisfaction and weariness of spirit he began to consider the six months that must pass before he would see her again, his promise to her being not to return to Brittany till she had renewed her figure, an order inspired by her vanity or by her love of him. Which? he asked himself incontinently. Some time this summer or in the autumn I must go to Paris, and arrange our marriage, though she thinks marriage will end my career, but a man's talent and career are not lost if he marry, nor retained, as she believes, if he abstain and live in celibacy. But the state of mistress and lover ends with child-bearing, and rising from the table he walked to the window to watch the Loire flowing by till a memory came into his mind of a quarrel, come about through her wish to visit him in his room one night, despite the danger of the Canon hearing their voices from the stairs. He has been at wander for several nights, unable to sleep, he had said. A reason there is for his sleeping soundly to-night, she replied; I pressed the wine upon him and he drank deeply. It may be so, he answered, but it is better to abstain from each other for one night more; and then if the Canon fail to sleep soundly we will enquire for an opiate at the herbalist. But anger broke into her face. I pray thee to believe me and to bear thy love in patience. But she turned away abruptly, leaving me to go to my room alone, asking myself what I had done to deserve this rebuff, and to fall asleep whilst seeking a reason for her conduct. The flowing river carried his thoughts out of the past into the future, and a long time seemed

to have gone by before he remembered that it might have been her weight on the bedside that had awakened him, or some dream, perchance, of her, for she was not long sitting by him when his eyes were opened as by a command, and seeing Héloïse in tears he began to wonder at the beauty of her face, now more beautiful than he had ever seen it before. I have been weeping, she said. For how long? he asked. Since I saw thee last. And how long is that? Three hours, she answered; and no longer able to bear my grief, I could not do else than disobey thy dear command, given, I know, for my safety. He stretched his arms to her, and placing the lamp on the table without blowing out the flame, she dropped her garment and glided down by his side, her face glowing with anticipation of the pleasure she could not withhold herself from any longer, nor long endure, but must escape out of into the nothingness of a swoon so deep that he could not awaken her. So heavy did she lie, almost without sign of life, beyond words or even kisses, that only a sigh could he get in answer; and if he tried to lift her, her eyes opened for a moment only and she dropped into swoon again. A swoon that may be death, he said; and every moment our danger is greater, for should the Canon's sleep be broken we are undone.

But though he spoke into her ear he could not rouse her, and at last, knowing barely what to do, he carried her out of his room, through the company-room, to hers, stumbling once in his haste, so loudly did the stair-head creak under their double weight. After laying her in her bed he would have escaped back to his room, but she, afraid of nothing, detained him; and, wrapt in admiration of her pale brown eyes, luminous in bluish white, set so far apart that the word noble rose unsought as the epithet most worthy of her, he sat listening as none had listened before, for none had ever heard before a woman speak of love

as she did, and not only of her love of him but of the poets who had loved before them. To listen to her was a spiritual intoxication, and he forgot the danger of the Canon, who might at any moment come up the staircase. But he did not come, and they continued to tell each other till daybreak of the verses they admired, she quoting three or four lines, sometimes ten or twelve, and when her memory failed her he was often able to prompt her. Now it was Ovid they were reciting, and then Virgil; afterwards a poet whom she loved better than he did, Tibullus, for being at heart a pagan she liked to read of the worship of the old Gods in ancient Rome. But he, being a Christian, was sometimes perturbed by the paganism into which his life was falling, all things slipping away from him, even his Christianity, while he was with her; and now that he was away from her, she in Brittany and he by the side of the Loire, the sense of his slavery frightened him, and he asked himself if the words: frightened him, were the ones to choose when speaking of her. No; frightened he was not; but this he knew of a certainty, that his life, hitherto a triumph, would change —for better or for worse he knew not which, but it would change. He had come to a parting of the ways. She would have him become a prelate, an archbishop, but knowing or rather feeling that he must have her as his wife, he would as lief return to Fulbert and make an end of the separation he was enduring: if she remained his mistress and not his wife these separations would continue, becoming longer, and their meetings briefer, till life lost its savour—philosophy leading him no longer, songs and tunes and poems and their music appealing to him no more. And it was in such uncertain mood that he stood watching the river flowing by, the green country stretching all the way to the ocean, the thought pressing him sorely that nothing on the earth or in the heavens above the earth mattered if Héloïse were lost to him, all

things having turned to one in his mind. The miracle is within me, and not without, as all things are, in God; and at six and thirty, at the height of my renown, I find myself helpless, without protection, my learning unavailing, a girl of seventeen having captured my life, leaving nothing but herself between me and nothingness.

He wandered from the town to watch the angles by the river, and though there were no hawks in the air, nor a heron, he saw the three birds still battling, for all he had seen and heard with Héloïse was for ever fixed in his memory. When she was with him all the world was wonderful, and now that she was absent the world interested him no more. Wherefore if any man be in love, he said, applying the apostle's words to his condition, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new. Such is my condition, he muttered, not knowing whether he was glad or sorry. And then the words of the evangelist coming to his aid, he said: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

And as the words of John were dying out of his mind he came upon Jean Guiscard walking in front of the inn amid his disciples, talking loudly, his head thrown back, staying his steps, however, for a moment to tell Abélard that he did not remember a prize having been granted to Rodebœuf. No; he did not remember having heard Rodebœuf's poem. He appealed to his disciples, but none remembered that Rodebœuf had sung before the Court. No; he did not remember. The heaviest sum of money was granted to a poet who had never written so well before, of that he was sure. The master sought for some verses of it in his memory and, finding none, turned again for help to his disciples; and Abélard was perplexed, for the poem that they tried to recall seemed not unlike his own poem. But he held his peace, and

accepted Jean Guiscard's almost command to join his company at supper in the inn yard.

As none suspected that Lucien de Marolle, the gleeman, was Abélard, the philosopher, he might sing and play in competition with all and sundry, thereby escaping from his too insistent self for a while, and laying aside the lute he was screwing up into tune, he gave his ear to Jean Guiscard, who was waiting for the complete attention of the company. After a last glance round to make sure that all eyes were upon him he began: we must not forget to-morrow in the pleasure of to-night, for many things will be debated at Franchard of great import, and questions so subtle will be put that the philosophers of old time would be obliged to collect their wits before answering. It will be asked to-morrow at Franchard if Aristotle would take the view that the husband's right to beget children could not be denied. The question will bring Plato into the debate, whose views, though not doubtful, cannot be stated briefly.

Jean Guiscard put out his hand for the flagon, and the wine that he drank seemed to awaken in him concern for the prospects of to-morrow's disputation, which he was afraid would soon overflow its banks and that they would find themselves involved sooner or later in contradictions, some vociferating views the very opposite to those they had set out in the beginning to uphold; for we are not all Platos and Aristotles, he cried, reaching out his hand again for the flagon. Aristotle's view, so you have said, Guiscard, would be that the husband's right to beget children could not be denied, but you have not said that Plato would side with or against him. Abélard waited for an answer to this question, which he already regretted having put, for disputation with Guiscard would profit him nothing. Plato, Jean Guiscard answered—in a tone more amiable than that which he had yet adopted towards Abélard—would begin by reminding the assembly

that the Court was called into being for the purpose of considering the soul rather than in hope of devising a wiser ordering for the material world than that which prevails at present. Is it true, Abélard asked, that Plato would overlook the bed, so essential in matrimony, and omit to speak of the model or archetypal bed laid up in heaven, and, rating the soul as he did above all things, would fail to see that children could not be begotten without concourse of lovers? If I have to answer all Lucien de Marolle's questions, cried Jean Guiscard, I shall not be able to tell the company of the many curious points the Court will have to decide to-morrow. I will ask no more questions, said Abélard, for we would hear the cases to be decided, and when we have heard them there will be time to expatiate in the views held by Plato and Aristotle.

In the questions we shall be called upon to decide, I shall range myself with Aristotle, Jean Guiscard said, holding that in a necessarily imperfect world a middle course is wiser than a counsel of perfection. Abélard would have liked to intervene again on behalf of Plato, but he could think only of Héloïse, and for the first time elected to remain outside a discussion; and he was glad he had done so when a hiccoughing gleeman interposed, saying that there were many who would wish to hear how a lady may protect her mouth from her husband, sudden and coarse incursions into the wife's chamber being common in married life. A kiss snatched from a sleeping lady is not a kiss, Jean Guiscard answered; for a kiss to be a kiss involves a mutual clinging of lips, and a lady, if she wishes to save her month, can do so with her hand and with her arm. She can do this much—— Well then, continued the caviller, another difficulty arises: if, while abandoning her body to her husband, her senses should awake, shall she be considered to be an unfaithful mistress? Our senses are beyond our control, sir, Jean

Guiscard replied, and the Court will recommend that a lady who would escape a sousing husband would do well to thrust a book of prayers under her pillow before lying down, recourse being made to it immediately the door opens, for in certain moods a husband does not care to hear prayers; holy names baffle his ardour, and the lady will be left to sleep unsoiled, repeating, perchance, the songs in which her beauty was woven into verse. This is a question, Guiscard continued, that will be put to-morrow; and the view will be held, I hope and believe, that a lover's prerogative should be to rise above his instincts, ceding the grosser parts of the woman to the husband and finding his sufficient delight in her kiss, the gainer thereby, for desire dies in attainment, as she to whom my life is dedicated has often said, checking me when wanton passion was about to overcome wisdom, and saying well: the mouth is the joint author of our wit, for it is through the mouth that the mind speaks; without our tongues we should be as animals, knowing naught of each other's souls. It is when lips meet that the soul rises up in the eyes, and it is at the parting of lips that a mistress, guessing her lover's heart, says: what concern is it of our love that my husband possesses me from the knee to the navel, since my eyes, my hair, my bosom, my hands, and of all, my mouth, are for thee and for thee alone? The rest of love is naught but residue and lees.

Again a memory of Héloïse restrained Abélard from answering the obscene drunkard. Hast no answer, Marolle, for our friend Jean Guiscard? asked a gleeman. Abélard was about to answer, but some gleemaidens, entering suddenly, diverted the attention of the company from him, and not wishing to find himself again among scenes of a great unseemliness, he retired to his bed, to fall asleep in the thought that next day he would leave Blois for Franchard to seek Rodebœuf, who, he learnt on his arrival at the inn, had not yet left the

neighbourhood. He wanders in the forest, said the innkeeper; and we hope he will return to pay his bill. He will pay it, Abélard answered, and giving his horse to the innkeeper he turned into the woods to ramble, nowise displeased at not having come upon Rodebœuf immediately. We shall meet soon enough, he muttered; and he rambled on, thinking of Héloïse, for now nothing else seemed worth thinking about. Realism and Nominalism, songs and lute-playing, were forgotten in remembrances of the light as it fell upon her clear brown face, of her laughter with a touch of sorrow in it always, of her fragrant fingers, of the lighting up of her face as a thought came into her mind—such thoughts as never came into a woman's mind before. In the woods of Franchard she was so near to him that he often looked up, almost expecting to see her: nearer, he continued, than when we were together in the false world that we call reality; to reveal her to me a few leagues were needed, and he vowed that when they met his love would be more worthy of her than it was in the past. And his thoughts breaking away suddenly, he asked himself if death would reveal the significance of our life to us. For the past being a mirror, he continued, death may be a greater mirror. The sound of water gurgling through the reeds accompanied his thoughts till he heard his name spoken, etc. (*continue top of page 26*).

ERRATA

PAGE 138 (last line). *Delete* But you nuns . . . bounding about you (page 139), *and substitute* But you nuns roll yourselves up in your warm habits like little hedgehogs. Cherriez found one in a ditch, and he wouldn't unroll till we put him in a tub of water; and then he began to swim, and we saw his little snout. But wasn't it very cruel, unkind, said Sister Tetta, to put the hedgehog into cold water? We wanted to see his little black snout, Astrolabe replied, and he didn't mind the cold water. I am never cold; I could run down to the river naked, and come back hopping and leaping—— Like a little hedgehog, interjected Sister Tetta. Hedgehogs can't hop and leap, Astrolabe answered, but fleas can, and I'd come back like a little flea. Dost know what I'd do? I'd run up and down thy back, biting little pieces out of thee.

PAGE 140 (two lines from bottom). *Delete* There are things . . . from the Saracen (page 142) *and substitute* I like both, mother. Couldst put two together? And when Mother Hilda asked him what there was in his mother's story that he'd have put into Madelon's, he answered: an old withered tree with no leaves and but one branch left for the black ravens to perch upon and talk to each other. That is what Madelon told me, and she says that Peronnik thought the ravens in the old tree were tame, for his was tame and fed out of his hand. So what do you think he did? He climbed high enough to hear the birds talking, and what he heard was: look here, look there, look everywhere. Peronnik thought that they were talking to him, so he peeped down the hole in the tree, and what do you think he saw?

Astrolabe would not continue his story till all the nuns had tried to guess what he saw, some saying gold, some saying great treasure, some bethinking themselves of the golden bowl and the diamond spear: but Astrolabe shook his head at all the answers. At last a sister said: a sword, to which Astrolabe replied: yes, he found a sword in the tree, but something else; guess again. The nuns could think of naught likely, and to soothe the child they said books and candlesticks and crowns and sceptres. No, no, no: Peronnik saw a knight's helmet, and Madelon says that where there is a helmet there may be a head, and perhaps a man's body, too. So Peronnik was afraid that there might be a little secret door out of which the man would come and kill him; and he was so afraid that he would not go near the tree for a very long time. And he tried very hard not to think of the knight, but he could not help it, mother, and at last he went to the tree to have another little peep. The knight was still there, and Peronnik climbed down the tree in a great hurry and was going to run away, when the ravens flew round him crying: look here, look there, look everywhere. Peronnik was frightened, for he knew ravens were sometimes very wicked birds, but he hadn't gone very far when he began to say to himself: perhaps the knight isn't alive and cannot hurt me. So one day he came with an adze and chopped a big hole in the bark, and what do you think he found? A big suit of armour with nothing in it but the knight's bones.

O, what a dreadful tale thou'rt telling us, cried the nuns. We shall not sleep to-night. All the same, said Sister Tetta, tell us what the armour was made of, if it was the work of a wizard. It was all made of silver, Astrolabe answered: and mother says it was not a wizard but a wizardess, who kept many knights in the dungeons of the Grey Castle. Every one wanted to kill her, but she was very clever and promised to wed the one who

could ride round the castle ramparts. Did Peronnik do this? Héloïse asked. He did, the child answered; and when he came back leading his horse by the bridle, the wizardess, I think, was afraid of Peronnik. And what befell him on the battlement? Sister Hilda asked. O, I forgot to tell about his jumping from battlement to battlement, and the wizardess, who wished to watch him, told one of her knights, who was a poor cripple, to hold up a silver shield so that she could see Peronnik. He jumped and jumped his horse, and then rode down a long flight of steps and ran up to her. She was so frightened that she gave one big cry and turned into smoke. She left her keys behind for Peronnik to unlock the dungeon door, where she had shut up the poor knights. When they came out and saw that they were free they all sang a hymn. And then they went away with Peronnik—— Here Astrolabe hesitated. Yes, darling? said his mother. Then they marched away to win the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracen (*continue* four lines from bottom of page 142. Bravo, little man, etc.).

Page 143 (three lines from top). *Read* knights *instead of* prisoners.

Page 143 (four lines from top). *Read* so silly *instead of* such fools.

Page 143 (five lines from top). *Delete* fierce.

Page 143 (sixth line from top). *Read* his name was Rogéar *instead of* by name Rogéar.

Page 145 (five lines from bottom). *Read* long *instead of* dashing *and* mouths *instead of* jaws.

Page 146 (four lines from top). *Delete* to eat, *and read* hungry *instead of* starving.

Page 146 (six lines from top). *Read* thou wouldst *instead of* you would.

Page 146 (eight lines from top). *Delete* inside *and substitute* Art sure *instead of* Are you sure.

Page 146 (fourteen lines from top). *Read* to please Mother Prioress *instead of* for the entertainment of Mother Prioress.

Page 154 (eighteen lines from top). *Delete* so much.

Page 154 (nineteen lines from top). *Delete* I shall escape . . . I've seen enough *and substitute* I have no little boy to play with here as I had in Brittany.

Page 156 (fifteen lines from bottom). *Delete* saying that he had not learnt . . . musical instruments.

Page 163 (eight lines from bottom). *Delete* to try to persuade her to allow you to play *and substitute* if you cannot play.

Page 164 (fourth line from top). *Delete* Give the Prioress . . . in a few minutes *and substitute* Give the Prioress this letter; and he wrote: the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, just returned from Palestine after fighting the Saracens for the Holy Sepulchre, waits upon her. If you come, good sir, from the Holy Land the Prioress will let us have the entertainment, you may be certain of that.

And he ran up the broad walk, arriving breathless, saying to one of the sisters: the gleeman gave me this. Give it at once to the Prioress, and tell her that he'll be here in a few minutes.

Page 174 (nine lines from bottom). *Delete* would be able to find a suitable accompaniment *and substitute* could follow him.

Page 191 (two lines from top). *Delete* whither he went to fight for the Sepulchre.

Page 191 (six lines from bottom). *Delete* I will pray . . . now that I have seen you, sir, *and substitute* if I could

follow the other little boys and be a Crusader with them, I would pray all day and all night, and I will ask mother to pray too, so that when I leave her she will know that I am praying for the same thing. She taught me all about the Lord Jesus when I came to the convent. I only said my prayers when mother was with me, but now that I have seen you, sir, I shall only think of prayer (*continue* Thou'rt a good boy, etc.).

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